NIKOLA TESLA, INVENTOR, DIES AT AGE OF 85

Gained Fame in Field of Electricity.

New York, Jan. 7 (AP).—Nikola Tesla, 85, an electrical inventor, died tonight in his suite at the Hotel New Yorker.

Members of the hotel staff reported that Tesla had been in failing health for two years. He was found dead in bed. With emphatic ideas on personal health as well as electrical engineering, Tesla was a vegetarian, and had his meals especially prepared for him.

The son of a Greek clergyman and a Serbian mother who was the daughter of an inventor, Tesla was born July 10, 1857, in Smiljan, a village of Austrian Croatia, and grew up with ideas buzzing in his head.

He got his schooling at the Polytechnic institute in Gratz and at the University of Prague. In after years such institutions as Yale, Columbia, and Vienna Polytechnic loaded him with honorary degrees.

Worked with Edison.

His practical career began in 1881 at Budapest, where he brought out his first invention, a telephone repeater. Three years later, when he was 27 years old, he migrated to the United States and became an American citizen.

For a time he worked at Orange, N. J., with the late Thomas A. Edison, specifically in designing motors and generators. He described Edison as "by far the most successful and probably the last exponent of the purely empirical method of investigation."

He soon went into research on his own hook, sending forth a stream of inventions. He conceived the first effective method of using alternating electrical current. Four years after landing in the United States, he patented an induction motor, making it possible to convert electrical energy into mechanical energy more efficiently and economically than by direct current.

Many Other Inventions.

The principle of the rotary magnetic field embodied in the apparatus used to transmit powers from Niagara falls was his invention.

Other work which helped raise him to a place among American inventors included a system of arc lighting, a system of electric conversion and distribution by oscillatory discharges, researches and discoveries in radiations, materials streams, and emanations.

New forms of dynamos, transformers, induction coils, condensers, and other electrical apparatus also were chalked up to the credit of his genius.

A bachelor always, his daily routine was unusual. His hour for retiring was 5:30 a. m. and he usually got up at 10:30 a. m.

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Life of Nikola Tesla

First Full Biography Of Electrical Genius

Reviewed by
Joachim Joesten

PRODIGAL GENIUS: THE LIFE OF NIKOLA TESLA. By John J. O'Neill. Ives Washburn. 322 pp. $3.75.

IF FAME can be measured by the linage accorded each great name in the standard reference books, the Yugoslav-American inventor Nikola Tesla undoubtedly has not yet come into his own. In both of the principal encyclopedias of the English-speaking world he trails his competitors in electrotechnical glory. The "Britannica" gives Tesla only 20 lines as compared with 108 for Guglielmo Marconi and 56 for Thomas A. Edison; in the "Americana" he rates 51 lines against 94 for Marconi and 180 for Edison.

In the eyes of John J. O'Neill, science editor of the New York *Herald Tribune* and a 1937 Pulitzer Prize winner, this is a flagrant injustice which he has set out to correct in his "Prodigal Genius," the first full-length biography of Nikola Tesla. He does so with all the skill of an expert, the verve of an able and entertaining writer, and the complete devotion of an admiring disciple, to whom the master once said, "You understand me better than any man alive."

The net result is as unstinting a eulogy as has ever come across my desk. O'Neill has no doubt whatsoever that the object of his veneration was the greatest genius ever to tread this earth.

This is not to say that O'Neill does not make a perfectly plausible case for his hero-worship. By any standard Tesla was a genius, a mental giant, and an electrical magician whose wizardry will stand unmatched for a long time to come. Whether he really deserves full credit for all the spectacular discoveries and achievements which his biographer attributes to him—and that includes dozens of things, from the harnessing of Niagara Falls to robots, radar and remote control—no layman could venture to decide. But even if O'Neill had been as extravagant in scientific acknowledgment as he at times is in his style, the uncontested and incontestable achievements of Tesla, in particular his advocacy of alternating instead of direct current, his polyphase system of power transmission, his transformer, arc-lighting, and bladeless turbine made him out one of the greatest in the field of electrical progress.

Tesla's life story, which the author presents in a captivating and frequently entertaining manner, is a typical and yet unique American saga. Born on the stroke of midnight, July 9 to 10, 1856, at Smiljan, a Croatian hamlet not far from Gospic in what is now Yugoslavia but then was Hungary, Tesla was the son of a Greek Ortho-

diwork in an electrical repair shop. Four years later, the penniless immigrant owned a million dollars, which George Westinghouse paid out to him for a bunch of his inventions. For the next 15 years he lived in clover, producing ever new wonders and entertaining freely. New York society lionized him but he neither married nor did he pay any attention to his female admirers. Sex was banned from the life of this fantastic explorer. In the '20s his fame declined and he was all but forgotten. He died on Jan. 8, 1943, penniless as he had arrived at these shores and alone as he had always been amid grandeur and glory.

...IKOLA TESLA